



## Overview: Run-ons

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When we join two complete statements (independent clauses) into a single sentence without correct punctuation, we create a **run-on**. Because we cannot always "hear" punctuation, we often create run-ons when we try to write the way we speak. These run-together sentences generally distort our message and cause problems for our readers.

Run-on sentences fall into one of two categories: fused sentences and comma splices. A **fused sentence** has two complete thoughts (independent clauses) with no punctuation between them. A **comma splice** has two complete thoughts separated only by a comma. A comma is not a strong enough punctuation mark to separate two independent clauses. Both the fused sentence and the comma splice incorrectly join two independent clauses.

**Fused Sentence:** The movie **ended I** went home.

**Comma Splice:** The movie ended, **I** went home.

You have four different options for correcting your run-together sentences.

1. Separate the two independent clauses with a period, and capitalize the next word.
2. Separate the two independent clauses with a comma, and add a coordinating conjunction (*and, but, for, nor, or, so, or yet*).
3. Change one of the independent clauses into a dependent clause with a subordinating conjunction (such as *if, because, since, after, or when*) or a relative pronoun (*who, whom, whose, which, or that*).
4. Separate the two independent clauses with a semicolon.

### Method 1: Use a Period

Separate the two independent clauses with a period, and capitalize the next word.

**Fused sentence:** She was lying on the **sofa she** had just eaten lunch.

**Corrected sentence:** She was lying on the sofa. **She** had just eaten lunch.

**Comma splice:** I began to think about my brother, **I** felt good.

**Corrected sentence:** I began to think about my brother. **I** felt good.

## Method 2: Use a Coordinating Conjunction

Separate the two independent clauses with a comma, and add a coordinating conjunction (*and, but, for, nor, or, so, or yet*).

**Fused sentence:** She was lying on the **sofa she** had just eaten lunch.

**Corrected sentence:** She was lying on the sofa, **for** she had just eaten lunch.

**Comma splice:** I began to think about my brother, I felt good.

**Corrected sentence:** I began to think about my brother, **so** I felt good.

## Method 3: Create a Dependent Clause

Change one of the independent clauses into a dependent clause with a subordinating conjunction (such as *if, because, since, after, or when*) or a relative pronoun (*who, whom, whose, which, or that*).

**Fused sentence:** She was lying on the **sofa she** had just eaten lunch.

**Corrected sentence:** She was lying on the sofa **because** she had just eaten lunch.

**Comma splice:** I began to think about my brother, I felt good.

**Corrected sentence:** **Whenever** I began to think about my brother, I felt good.

**Hint:** If you put the dependent clause at the beginning of the sentence, add a comma between the two sentence parts.

**Because she had just eaten lunch,** she was lying on the sofa.

## Method 4: Use a Semicolon

Separate the two independent clauses with a semicolon.

**Fused sentence:** She was lying on the **sofa she** had just eaten lunch.

**Corrected sentence:** She was lying on the sofa; **she** had just eaten lunch.

**Comma splice:** I began to think about my brother, I felt good.

**Corrected sentence:** I began to think about my brother; **I** felt good.

When you use a semicolon, you can also add a **transition**, a word or an expression that indicates how the two independent clauses in the sentence are related. A transition often makes the sentence smoother. It is placed after the semicolon and is followed by a comma.

She was lying on the sofa; **in fact**, she had just eaten lunch.

I began to think about my brother; **consequently**, I felt good.

Here are some transitions commonly used with semicolons.

### Transitions Used with a Semicolon Before and a Comma After

<i>also</i>	<i>for instance</i>	<i>in fact</i>	<i>of course</i>
<i>consequently</i>	<i>furthermore</i>	<i>instead</i>	<i>otherwise</i>
<i>finally</i>	<i>however</i>	<i>meanwhile</i>	<i>similarly</i>
<i>for example</i>	<i>in contrast</i>	<i>nevertheless</i>	<i>therefore</i>

Overview and Help Me Answer This adapted from *Mosaics: Focusing on Sentences in Context* by Kim Flachmann.